



## **Social Media Policy**

### **Policy Statement**

This policy is intended to help councillors and council staff to make appropriate decisions about the use of social media websites. Social media is a collective term used to describe methods of publishing on the internet through channels such as Facebook or Twitter.

This policy outlines the standards the Council requires councillors and staff to observe when using social media, the circumstances in which the Council will monitor the use of social media and the action to be taken in respect of breaches of this policy.

This policy supplements and should be read in conjunction with all other policies and procedures adopted by the Council, such as the Communications Policy and Members Code of Conduct.

The use of social media does not replace existing forms of communication and should be seen as a complimentary form of communication which could engage more with certain sectors of the community.

This policy and the use of social media may be amended or withdrawn at any time.

### **Who is covered by this policy**

This policy covers all individuals working at all levels within the Council, including all elected and co-opted councillors and the Clerk to the Council.

The Council will appoint a nominated person or persons as moderator of parish council social media output who will be responsible for posting and monitoring content and to ensure it complies with the Social Media Policy.

## **The scope of this policy**

All members and staff are expected to comply with this policy at all times to protect the reputation, privacy, confidentiality and interests of the Council, its services, employees, partners and community.

Serious breaches of this policy by any councillor or council representative may be dealt with as appropriate. The Council may take disciplinary action in respect of unlawful, libellous, harassing, defamatory, abusive, threatening, harmful, obscene, profane, sexually orientated, homophobic or racially offensive comments by the council member or representative.

Behaviour required by the Members' Code of Conduct shall apply to online activity in the same way it does to other written or verbal communication.

Members will bear in mind that inappropriate conduct can still attract adverse publicity, even where the code does not apply. Remarks are easily withdrawn, apologised for and forgotten when made in person, but posting them on the internet means that they have been published in a way that cannot be contained.

It must be remembered that communications on the internet are permanent and public. When communicating via social, media consideration needs to be given as to if we would make the same statement via any other method. If the answer is no, then the said statement should not be made via social media.

## **Social Media Uses**

The Council will encourage the use of social media for the purposes of;

- Post notices, dates and minutes of meetings
- Advertise events and activities (Carol singing, Tree planting, Remembrance Service, Britain in Bloom support)
- Parish Council News – Information on decisions made which will benefit the community.
- Post good news stories
- Link to appropriate websites
- Advertise vacancies
- Retweet or 'share' information from partners i.e. Police, library, Cheshire East Council etc.
- Engagement with page followers on general enquiries.
- Post of share information promoting bodies for community benefit such as schools, Scouts, sports clubs and community groups.
- Post other items as the Council see fit.

## Social Media Standards

When participating in online communication, staff and councillors must;

- Ensure all official social media engagement should come from the Parish Council page. A moderator should not post official council social media posts from their own social media account.
- Any posts should identify which member or representative has made it via a sign off of initials at the end of the post.
- Be responsible and respectful; be direct, informative, brief and transparent
- Never make false or misleading statements
- Not post content that is contrary to the democratic decisions of the council.
- Not present themselves in a way that might cause embarrassment. The good representation of the council must be protected.
- Be mindful of the information posted on sites and make sure personal opinions are not published as being that of the Council
- Keep the tone of comments respectful and informative, never condescending or 'loud'. Use sentence case format, not capital letters. Spell and grammar check everything
- Refrain from posting controversial or potentially inflammatory remarks. Language that may be deemed as offensive relating in particular to race, sexuality, disability, gender, age, religion or belief should not be published on any social media site
- Avoid personal attacks and do not enter into online fights and hostile communications.
- Do not post comments that you would not be prepared to make in writing or face to face.
- Seek permission to publish original photographs or video from the persons or organisations in the video or photographs before they are uploaded. You must check that there is parental permission before photos of children are used
- Respect the privacy of other councillors, staff and residents
- Never post any information or conduct any online activity that may violate legislation or regulations such as libel and copyright.
- Residents and councillors should be aware that not all communication through social media requires a response, although an acknowledgement should be made if appropriate.
- Any matter that is raised in any form of social media needs further consideration by the Council may be raised as full agenda item for consideration by the council. The 'poster' shall be informed via the page or direct message that this is the case and invited to contact the Clerk direct. Any response agreed by the Council will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.
- If a poster was to communicate via a social media channel but in a manner which would be deemed inappropriate, defamatory or of a libellous nature. A Parish Council moderator would reserve the right to remove the offending post.

Reports of any concerns regarding content placed on social media sites should be reported to the Clerk for referral to the moderator and/or the full Council as required.

This policy will be reviewed and updated on a as required basis.

12<sup>th</sup> July 2018